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A BIRTHDAY OFFERING TO "THE FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY"

ARTHUR DETMERS

(The stage will be set with a large photograph or other picture of Washington, in the center. Behind it, concealed from view will be the person chosen to speak for him. At the beginning of the exercise, the pupils who are to take part will go up on the stage and seat themselves on the right and left and somewhat to the fore of the picture. The several speakers will address themselves to the picture, taking care, of course, to make themselves heard by the audience.)

The entire audience will sing "America."

The first speaker. Tomorrow is your birthday. Nearly two centuries have passed since your eyes opened on the world, and a century and a quarter since you have passed away. But your spirit still lives among us, and today we, the people of this distant time, dwellers in the land you loved, though in regions of which you hardly had heard, bring to you, as an offering, the AMERICA of today. We bring you the *greatness* of America—its millions of inhabitants, its boundless wealth, and all the wonder of its development. You believed in the coming greatness of the land to which you devoted your life, but not even you could have foreseen what the swift moving years have revealed. Like children, then, who bring gifts on the natal day of those they love, we lay these offerings before you.

The second speaker. I bring to you a vast country. It stretches from ocean to ocean. A land of mighty rivers and mountains, of fertile plains and ancient forests. Beneath its surface lies the wealth of iron and coal and oil and gold and silver and all those stores of ages gone, that now make the nations of the earth great. A hundred million and more dwell here, scattered over prairies and mountain land or congregated into towns and cities such as your eyes never beheld.

I bring you the vast region of the north that stretches along the Pacific toward the pole.

I bring you the far-off islands of the sea, peopled by alien races, and the nearer islands of the Gulf.

Over all these floats the stars and stripes.

The third speaker. I bring you untold wealth, greater than ever any people on earth has gathered from the soil or from beneath it. Here are thousands of men richer than the richest man of your time, here are great corporations richer still. Here are banks stuffed with money, banks of the rich and banks in which the common folk safely store their earnings. Every year the Government at Washington garners in taxes from this people, not one, but several billions of dollars. Every year the governments of the half-a-hundred states and territories, and the innumerable cities, towns, countries and villages exact from the same people millions upon millions for the carrying on of the commonwealth. No people was ever so rich!

The fourth speaker. I bring to you today undreamed-of marvels of human skill. Marvels which have brought the widely scattered millions of America more closely together than were the people in the smallest colony a century and a half ago. The surface of the land is covered with a net-work

of rails along which thousands of trains dart day and night. The great lakes and rivers are ploughed by swift steamers bearing rich cargoes from factories and mines. The people of countless cities and towns are carried hither and thither on electrically propelled cars. The streets and paved roads are alive with machine-driven vehicles. Through the air dart winged craft transporting men and goods with incredible swiftness. News flies over wires and through the air unceasingly and almost as quickly as thought. A strange world is this! Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new!

The fifth speaker. Without knowledge no self-ruled people could long exist. I bring to you a land in which Education is the common heritage. The people have consecrated to this use untold wealth, so that no man, woman or child may be deprived of knowledge. The whole land is dotted with little shrines of learning. Cities and towns vie with one another in providing free high schools, and there is no state in the Union that does not proudly point to its great colleges and universities, its schools of law and medicine and technical sciences. Never, in any land, has education been so universal and so free. This gift we are proud to lay before you today.

The sixth speaker. My gift is the outpoured product of thousands of printing presses—books, magazines, newspapers. There is not a field of human thought that remains unproductive. And the great publishing houses all over the land are unceasingly spinning these products into printed words and sending them broadcast into every town and hamlet. Who can number the volumes of fiction, of history, of essays, of scientific treatises that issue from our presses! What age ever conceived, much less produced, such marvels of magazine literature, or of daily news-sheets? Masterpieces, it is true, are now, as ever, rare. Now, as ever, literary works have their hour, then cease to be. But something always remains stored up in the minds of men, something “to make the next age better than the last.” This we offer to you today.

The seventh speaker. A more humble offering is the one I bring—the gift of Music and Art. Too intently, all these years, have we been busied in conquering the soil and building up material prosperity. Our eyes have been fixed on the earth, while we have been too little aware of the splendor above and around us.

No great creators of music are or have been ours—no Bach or Beethoven or Wagner. But everywhere throughout the land is growing up a respect and a love for this wondrous art. Out of this will yet come some great master!

So, too, with other forms of beauty. We have only a few artists of distinction; but little by little we grow in knowledge and appreciation of all that is fine in painting and sculpture and the other arts that enrich and adorn life. We bring you only a meager *achievement* but high *hopes*!

The eighth speaker. I bring you all that the spirit of humanity in this land of ours has embodied in institutions for easing the burden of life for those who are unfortunate: the hospitals—seven thousand and more—for those who are sick in body or mind, the free dispensaries for those who are poor, the schools for the blind, the deaf and dumb. I bring the great foundations established by the rich for searching into the causes of man's evils. I bring the agencies of relief for those who suffer in time of war or in calamities that befall in time of peace. These and a hundred others—expressions of the generous heart of America, I bring you today.

The ninth speaker. Greater than all the other gifts is the one I bring.

It is the gift of a Free People, a Democracy such as no other nation has surpassed. A democracy in which every man and woman bears the right to direct, so far as in him lies, the destiny of his country. A Democracy in which every citizen may aspire to the highest places of service and honor. Eight and forty states welded together into a mighty Union in which the ruling power is the people themselves, exercising inalienable rights. I bring you a government of the people, by the people and for the people, proud of its past, confident of its present, resolute of its future.

Washington. Men, women, and children of my country, great and marvelous are the gifts you have brought me today. Many things you tell me, I cannot understand. I can only wonder. America, in truth, is the most blessed among the nations of the earth. If, in such a land, men fail to achieve the highest state attainable by mankind, where is the hope of the world?

Is this dear land of mine, then, a land in which men do justice and love righteousness? Is it a land such as was dreamed of in my day, of liberty, equality and fraternity? Is this vast wealth of which you speak fairly shared by all?

Do the great parties emulate each other in service to the common good, or do men still strive selfishly to win for themselves, or for those of like mind, riches and advancement?

Does the spirit of toleration prevail? Are the minds of men open to receive new knowledge and larger wisdom, or are they fearful and unadventurous? Do the myriads of books and papers they read give them right understanding, and inspire them to just thoughts and noble deeds?

Are the tens of millions of men and women of the great Democracy—they who have the power to will what shall be—alive to its destiny? Are they faithful to their responsibilities, clean and fearless in their thinking, just and resolute in their acts?

Is my country still a refuge for the oppressed, a Promised Land for those who tread wearily long pathless ways?

In all that makes for material greatness, your wealth is immeasurable. But amid your riches, do not forget the words of ancient wisdom:

"The things which are seen are temporal, but those which are unseen are eternal."

(As the voice of Washington concludes its questioning, a last speaker will respond briefly.)

The tenth speaker. The vision is not lacking among us, though those who possess it are few; but it is the "grain of mustard seed—the "yeast"—that will in time transform the whole. And we, we to whom so much has been given, we children, will strive as best we can to have a share in making America a people whose God is justice and righteousness and peace.

THE NEGRO—A LINCOLN BIRTHDAY EXERCISE

IRENE I. CLEAVES

On the opening day of the Francis W. Parker School, after the Christmas recess, many of the younger alumni, not yet gone back to college after the vacation, come to the morning exercise. Miss Cooke always sets aside the day to welcome them. Standing on the platform, and looking past the alumni, back over the years, Miss Cooke on this